AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) An encoding method for encoding an image signal corresponding to a plurality of frames included in a video sequence, said method comprising:

determining whether intervals between image display times of successive frames in the plurality of frames included in the video sequence are constant or variable;

~~encoding said image signal to obtain a bitstream of encoded image signal;~~

~~generating~~ setting a display cycle identifier ~~operable to indicate~~ to be a variable display cycle identifier or a constant display cycle identifier based on said determining, said display cycle identifier indicating if ~~all~~ intervals between image display times of successive frames in the plurality of frames included in the video sequence are ~~either~~ constant or variable; ~~can be variable,~~ ~~the display cycle identifier being included in each header of the video sequence; and~~

encoding said image signal to obtain a bitstream of encoded image signal; and

multiplexing said display cycle identifier and said bitstream, the display cycle identifier being included in each header of the video sequence.

12. (New) An encoding apparatus for encoding an image signal corresponding to a plurality of frames included in a video sequence, said encoding apparatus comprising:

a determining unit operable to determine whether intervals between image display times of successive frames in the plurality of frames included in the video sequence are constant or variable;

2

a setting unit operable to set a display cycle identifier to be a variable display cycle identifier or a constant display cycle identifier based on said determining, said display cycle identifier indicating if intervals between image display times of successive frames in the plurality of frames included in the video sequence are constant or variable;

an encoding unit operable to encode said image signal to obtain a bitstream of encoded image signal; and

a multiplex unit operable to multiplex said display cycle identifier and said bitstream, the display cycle identifier being included in each header of the video sequence.